

# Media's Use of Propaganda to Persuade People's Attitude, Beliefs and Behaviors

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#### Attitudes, Belief's and Behaviors

The previous picture and poem is a clear example of propaganda which is a form of persuasion used to influence people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. A working definition of propaganda is the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person. While propaganda has been around for almost a thousand years, only recently (last 100 years) with the advent of technologies that allow us to spread information to a mass group has it evolved to a scientific process capable of influencing a whole nation of people. While propaganda is most evident in times of war as in the poster, it is constantly being used as a political and social means in even less obvious ways to influence peoples attitudes. This is currently evident with all the election commercials on TV, where the candidates are using propaganda techniques to elevate themselves above their competitor. Another place propaganda is being exploited is by the use of the media in its portrayal of countries that have nuclear technology.

Modern propaganda uses all the media available to spread its message, including: press, radio, television, film, computers, fax machines, posters, meetings, door-to-door canvassing, handbills, buttons, billboards, speeches, flags, street names, monuments, coins, stamps, books, plays, comic strips, poetry, music, sporting events, cultural events, company reports, libraries, and awards and prizes. It is most likely that some of these media uses are surprising, but that only serves to show how easy it is to not even recognize propaganda as such. For the purpose of our paper we will focus on mainly the usage of the press in their tactics of shaping people's opinions. The press (newspapers and magazines) is important because the most current news and issues are spread every day through them. The **Dune affect** is a term we coined--after the movie Dune--which explains that those who control and have access to media have access to and potential control of public opinion.

Indeed, propaganda is so powerful because everyone is susceptible to it. This is true as explained by Robert Cialdini, an *expert* in influence, because people exist in a rapidly moving and complex world. In order to deal with it, we need shortcuts. We cannot be expected to recognize and analyze all the aspects in each person, event, and situation we encounter in even one day. We do not have the time, energy, or capacity to process the information; and instead we must very often use our stereotypes, our rules of thumb, to classify things according to a few key features and then to respond without thinking when one or another of these trigger feature are present (Cialdini 6). While this makes people highly susceptible to a propagandist who understands persuasion, in general it is the most efficient for of behaving, and in other cases it is simply necessary. Additionally, propaganda includes the reinforcement of societal myths and stereotypes that are so

deeply embedded within a culture that it is often difficult to recognize the message as propaganda.

For example I just used a persuasive technique that propagandist use all the time by introducing Cialdini as an *expert*. The heuristic this follows is the obedience to authority and is a rule that when someone credible and in this case by title of an expert, a person will automatically believe the information to be correct. "Titles are simultaneously the most difficult and the easiest symbols of authority to acquire. To earn a title normally takes years of work and achievement. Yet, it is possible for somebody who has put in none of this effort to adopt the mere label and receive an automatic difference" Cialdini 181). After all, what really makes Cialdini an expert?

Since propaganda is such a powerful tool and because people are so susceptible of it, it is our goal in this paper to outline how to analyze propaganda, the techniques that are used through case studies of the media's portrayal of nuclear power for France and Pakistan, and how one can defend against the influence of propaganda.

## Why Were Pakistan and France Chosen?

In selecting subjects for the case study, it became increasingly important to select countries where there would be a clear advantage for the United States media to favor the atomic power of one over the other. For instance, France has historically—as far back as the American Revolution—been a United States ally, not to mention a close economic partner. Especially at the start of the 1960's, when France exploded their first atomic bomb, the relationship between the two countries was steadily growing tighter through the formation of NATO in 1949, with the common communist enemy for both countries ensuring cooperation. Therefore, there is a logical connection between the French prosperity and American welfare.

The relationship is not so reciprocal between the United States and Pakistan. A Muslim nation, Pakistan has conflicted with United States interest in and support of Israel. The ties between the United States and Pakistan are not very strong, and there is no United States gain in the creation of a strong Pakistan.

Based on the relations between the United States and France and Pakistan, we predicted that propaganda would exist in the American media that portrays the powerful nuclear technology of France significantly more positively than that of Pakistan. We will analyze specific examples of such propaganda based on a methodical process as described below.

#### How to Analyze Propaganda

Sine propaganda has become a systematic process it is possible to analyze how the media has used it in shaping our opinions about France having a nuclear bomb verse Pakistan. Propaganda can be broken into ten stages when analyzing it in detail. These stages are: 1) the ideology and purpose of the propaganda campaign, 2) the context in which the propaganda occurs, 3) identification of the propagandist, 4) the structure of the propaganda organization, 5) the target audience, 6) media utilization techniques, 7) special various techniques, 8) audience reaction to various techniques, 9) counterpropaganda, if present, and 10) effects and evaluation (Jowett and O'Donnell 213).

While it is possible to go into detail about each point, we are mainly concerned with numbers six and seven: What techniques the media uses. There are many techniques and persuasion tactics the media uses to disseminate information. We will specifically focus on three case studies in the France / Pakistan nuclear issue that highlight different tactics the media use. What is important to

understand about all the tactics is that no matter which one is being used they all follow the same criteria: *it must be seen, understood, remembered, and acted upon.* Thus, propaganda can be evaluated according to its ends and interestingly enough this is the same criteria that advertiser use every day in ads, and commercials in "selling" a product.

# Case Study #1: Social Proof, Societal Norms, Similarity, and Dehumanization

Studying media coverage of Pakistan's nuclear achievement, it becomes clear that a certain amount of propaganda was used to make Pakistan appear threatening. The fact that Pakistan developed the technology was not what shaped the articles, but rather how this information was presented to the reader. In a sense, the propagandists were looking to turn Pakistan into an enemy of sorts, a country to be feared, instead of embraced.

One method used to by propagandists to create an enemy is through the technique of social proof. One way in which we process information is by observing what other people are doing that are similar to us or linking them to social norms. "When we are unsure of ourselves, when the situation is unclear or ambiguous, when uncertainty reigns, we are most likely to look to and accept the actions of others as correct" (Cialdini 106). Since it is almost impossible for the common American to be an expert in nuclear cause and effects, he looks to what others say as a means to form his opinion. This allows him to be persuade to an ideology not of his own. Furthermore, it is possible to rely on past stereotypes as form of linking one idea to another group.

For example, articles that took such an approach attempted to use a subset of social proof, where one casts the enemy by declaring it to be a friend of an already established enemy. For instance, in order to persuade the American public to think of Pakistan in such terms, media will link Pakistan to historically defined United States enemies such Libya, Iran, Iraq and the former Soviet Union. This tactic plays on the principle of social proof in which people look for justifications to quickly form their beliefs. Thus, linking to a country America already has shared beliefs about quickly allows one to associate and project the existing beliefs on the new group, which in this case is Pakistan.

An article in the Washington Post took such an approach by starting with a quote from the Iranian Foreign Minister, congratulating Pakistan. "From all over the world, Muslims are happy that Pakistan has this capability," the Minister was quoted at the start of the article (Moore and Khan A19). By beginning with this quote, the article ensured a link would be established between Iran and Pakistan, playing off the propaganda theory of similarity, in which we fundamentally like people who are similar to us and share our beliefs, values, and ideas. Therefore, an object deemed as bad or dissimilar will make all associated objects bad as well and allows the media to use social proof and similarity to *create an enemy as friend of enemy*. Arguably, the presentation of this quote may be deemed important factually for the development of the article, but the placement of the quote right at the start of the article strongly suggest propagandistic intentions.

To strengthen the feel of Pakistan as a friend of the enemy, the article continues to use the dissimilar tactic or hatred through association by further linking Pakistan with Syria Libya:

At the same time, the prospect that Pakistan could share its nuclear technology with other Islamic states, or serve as their protector, concerns many Western analysts, who fear that nuclear materials and technology may fall into the hands of countries the West has branded sponsors of terrorism, such as Syria and Libya (Moore and Khan A19).

Thus the distinction at this point is that because the article began by subliminally suggesting connections between Pakistan and a nation connected to terrorism (Iran), the ability of the

aforementioned passage to link Pakistan with Syria and Libya all the more affective. By creating the sensation that Pakistan is connected with such nations early on, the notion becomes all the more believable later, even when no direct evidence is presented.

The Washington Post article is not merely an isolated incident. We have found many examples of this propagandistic approach in our research, from newspapers in the United States and other ally nations (Fisk 9, Goldenberg 19, Stockill 22). Interestingly, a Jewish newspaper in Jerusalem adopted this approach as well. The Jerusalem Post published a similar article on Pakistan's atomic weapons, starting with a reference to the Iranian Foreign Minister. Using the same propagandistic method of creating an enemy through association, the article stated: "Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi's visit to Islamabad a few days after Pakistan joined the nuclear club seemed to emphasize [the dangers of an 'Islamic bomb']" (Steinberg 8).

The Jerusalem Post and the Washington Post articles also take another approach to the propagandistic tactic of creating an enemy as friend of enemy. Not only do both of them link Pakistan to Iran, Syria, and Libya politically--by showing ties between the countries--they further connect the countries through religion by using the coined term: Islamic bomb. The term is not a new one, originating in the 1970's after the former President of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutton referred to the desire to produce a nuclear bomb to help counter the nuclear arsenals of the Christians, Communists, and eventually Hindus (Downie A20).

Largely misquoted, the term became used in much of the anti-Pakistani propaganda of labeling by generalization. In fact, both the articles in the Washington Post and the Jerusalem Post make references to the potential threat of an "Islamic bomb." Such references are made despite repeated statements from the Pakistani government explaining that Pakistan does not intend to share any of its nuclear technology with any country. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said, "No one should give religious color to the success achieved by our nuclear scientists.... It is incorrect to call it an Islamic bomb" (Moore 19).

Despite the Pakistani attempts to disavow the notion of an Islamic Bomb, American media has been using the term rather liberally as a propaganda tactic of dehumanization, a tactic that involves lumping a group together in such a way that takes away any individuality. This is effective because we systematically blur distinctions and insist that the enemy remain faceless so that any acts are done not against men, women, and children, but a mass identity and in this case surrounded by the group with the "Islamic bomb."

Such techniques can be found in even scholarly works, such as one written through the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University where the term Islamic Bomb is used to persuade the public to see nuclear proliferation into South Asia as a threat to national security. Using the faceless enemy tactic, the paper written by Rodney Jones states that Pakistan's centrifuge program in 1979 "were accompanied by suggestions that the program was financed by Libya and dramatized the notion that the end result would be an Islamic bomb" (44).

Similar to the articles previously described that used suggested links between Iran and Pakistan in connection to the Islamic Bomb, Jones follows a similar path. After establishing a faceless enemy Jones mentions the "rise to power of Ayatollah Khomeini and his clerical associates in Iran" (44). From a propagandistic point of view, this approach is the same as the newspaper articles that provide indirect connections between Iran and Pakistan, a tactic described as similarity. This same tactic is used by Jones to connect Pakistan to Libya as well. He describes, "Libya happens to be the one country where motives, financial capabilities, and mineral geography could have smoothly

converged to make the Pakistani project feasible" (49).

In addition to linking Pakistan with terrorist nations, there was a desire to also link it with the former Soviet Union during the Cold War. The need, from a propagandistic point of view, is one in the same. That is, there was a desire to expand the ideology by mentioning almost every United States enemy surrounding Pakistan. Although there was virtually no political connection between Pakistan and the former Soviet Union at the time (1981), Jones was able to make the connection through another avenue of thought:

If proliferation in the region furthers divisiveness and political instability, the Soviet Union will be impelled to make the best of it, and the net consequence of that over the long term are likely to be adverse for the West. In short, although nuclear proliferation as a general matter is contrary to the interests of both superpowers, it is arguably less damaging to the superpower that ultimately prefers fundamental changes in the structure of world politics than to the one that favors evolutionary change in the world order (45).

Therefore, Jones used three approaches to linking Pakistan with American enemies: 1. Creating political ties by suggestions that one is another through similarity by association with another pre-established norm as with the reference to Iran. 2. Creating religious ties of labels and dehumanization of the Islamic Bomb 3. Creating external relationships playing on social proof and paranoia in which there was a passage where he described how Pakistan would indirectly help the former Soviet Union whether they wanted to or not, since their control of nuclear technology would upset the current balance of power in the area.

It is not simply the presentation of the information that makes Jones' approach propagandistic, and the same is true for newspaper articles, television shows, and radio broadcasts. The media will present the reader of viewer with information, but specific propaganda tactics help shape the presentation of the information to be more effective and help persuade people to think about the topic in a certain context.

### Case Study #2: Enemy as Barbarian, and Authority

We will explore another example of how the facts are tinted using propaganda tactics with a focus on how the American media portrays the stability of Pakistan. As with the tactics that link Pakistan to nations that are considered enemies of the United States, the key will be to focus on how the factual information is presented, in what context, to serve what purpose. By media displaying Pakistan as an unstable nation while discussing nuclear technology, it will persuade the public to fear Pakistan. This tactic which is *Enemy as Barbarian: threat to culture is* intended to create an enemy, by creating a sense that Pakistan is a country that is not worthy of nuclear technology. The idea behind enemy as barbarian is to portray the subject as rude, crude, uncivilized, and animalistic.

Thus the media describe Pakistan in terms that will establish it as a global threat because of their instability. For example, the Washington Post Quote of the Day was by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani engineer responsible for nuclear development. It read as follows: "I am one of the kindest persons in Pakistan. I feed the birds, I feed ants in the morning. I feed monkeys that come down the mountain" ("Quote of the Day" 38). Although the Post acknowledges the accomplishments of Khan as an engineer, they clearly represent Pakistan in a way that is far from establishing it as an advanced country technically. The rural feel of "monkeys that come down the mountain" is enough

to make any reader question the reliability of nuclear technology in a country that appears to be far from modern.

In fact, this propagandistic tactic is highly subtle, since the connection to nuclear weapons is not directly made in the quote. It is not until the reader read the last two lines that the connection is made:

#### Abdul Qadeer Khan

"the father of the Islamic bomb" ("Quote of the Day" 38).

By connecting the speaker with the nuclear weapons, the Post was able to thus connect the rural feeling created by the quote to the nuclear technology. Since one does not imply the other, there is a sense of uneasiness created in the mind of the reader. The critical point is that although the quote is correct factually, the context in which it is presented, the specific form and placement of labels, is what makes it propaganda.

In another article in the Los Angeles Times describing nuclear technology in Pakistan, the reference to the instability of the nation was more direct:

For more than two decades, the prospect of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and South Asia has stirred the concept of an 'Islamic bomb'—the entry of an Islamic nation into the ranks of the nuclear powers and its impact on religious, ethnic and political conflict in one of the world's most volatile regions (Daniszewski A10).

By locating Pakistan in "one of the world's most volatile regions" the authors quickly establish why the country should not have nuclear weapons without ever explicitly making the statement. The article continues by explaining that "Myron Weiner, a sociologist and South Asia expert at MIT, is one of the many analysts who say they are concerned that if Pakistan is pushed to the brink of financial ruin...it might respond by selling its nuclear technology" (Daniszewski A10). This tactic relies on authority of an expert testimony which is explained in the introduction as a heuristic that when someone credible and in this case by title of an expert, a person will automatically believe the information to be correct. To media uses this tactic to help establish the ideologue that the unstable region of Pakistan can only cause problems with their nuclear technology.

# Case Study #3: Dune Affect, Reprogramming, and Commitment to Consistency

In order to get a better feel for how the United States media is able to persuade the public to think about Pakistan's nuclear technology in a negative way, it is helpful to see how the same media is able to make a different county's nuclear technology appear unrelated to global stability and safety. In effect, the purpose of the propaganda will be to ensure that French nuclear technology appears non-threatening.

In order to achieve this goal, the media had to take the focus of nuclear technology away from the military implications and focus it elsewhere. Many articles that came out in newspapers across America after France exploded their first atomic bomb on February 13, 1960 shifted the focus toward more political themes. This is a clear example of the **Dune affect**, which states that those who control the media control the opinions of the people. Subjectively, the media focuses on shifting the focus from something bad to something good when it serves the ideology they wish to spread. Furthermore, it is possible for this to be work because this exploits a well-known principle of human behavior which says, "people simply like to have reasons for what they do" (Cialdini 3).

Thus, the media only needs to give a reason for their message despite its validity in order for it to be accepted.

For example, the Chicago Tribune's article on the French test on the day of the explosion downplayed all military applications of the nuclear technology. It stated: "The initial effect is likely to be the strengthening of President de Gaulle's position when soviet Premier Khrushchev visits France March 15 (1960)" ("Sahara Blast Successful" 1). Moreover, the article continues to take away emphasis on the war-related side of the technology by refocusing on politics: "The meeting [with Khrushchev] will be followed quickly by de Gaulle's trips to Britain and the Untied States. In all three meetings he's expected to assert his views with more force than ever" ("Sahara Blast Successful" 1). Thus the reader becomes interested the diplomacy that comes with the nuclear technology instead of the implications for destruction.

To strengthen this effect of the shift of emphasis, the Tribune article moves to discuss the effects of the nuclear weapons of "restoring French grandeur and influence...and greater cooperation within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)" ("Sahara Blast Successful" 1). Effectively turning the emphasis from war to de Gaulle and French diplomacy relies heavily on the persuasive techniques in reprogramming which allows the author to shift the focus and begin making greater speculations. In another Chicago Tribune article published that same day, the author actually shifted the focus from war technology to disarmament talks: "The explosion placed France in a better position to conclude agreements with the world's atomic powers leading to nuclear disarmament" ("France Sets Off A-Bomb in the Sahara" 13). Twisting the focus 180 degrees, from the destructive technology, to diplomacy, to disarmament talks, the article was able to spin the truth or reality because it served the purpose of the propagandist who had control of the media.

Similarly, the New York Times published an article a week after the test in which it emphasized the impact of the French nuclear technology on NATO instead of war: "By joining the atomic club, de Gaulle hopes to gain a voice in big power disarmament decisions and to increase the influence of French diplomacy" (Sulzberger 22). And so the propaganda tactic of giving any justification because people simply like to have reasons for what they do comes into play as the article persuades the reader to focus on the non-threatening nature of the technology. This persuasion comes across the strongest when the article explains that the French nuclear technology was designed "to increase the influence of French diplomacy," since this goal encompasses no aggressive intentions on the part of the French.

The article continues by stating that "Eventually it would be sensible to give the French certain nuclear arms in return got promises to use such weapons as NATO requires" (Sulzberger 22). Since the article began by suggesting that France is worthy of nuclear weapons, since they will not use them for ill deeds, the idea of giving them nuclear technology would now seem logical. This is a persuasion tactic known as commitment to consistency, which is plays on human's "obsessive desire to be (and appear to be) consistent with what we have already done" (Cialdini 50-51). The tactic works by starting small and building by slowly reinforces be consistent with commitment whether it be public or private. This tactic allows the author and media in general to slowly bring the reader to a conclusion that would normally be difficult to justify. C. L. Sulzberger ends this New York Times article on such a note: "In aiding France we cannot risk offending other allies. But there is no doubt this country now qualifies for special" treatment (22). Thus Sulzberger takes the tactic of commitment to consistency to the next level as he leaves the future ambiguous, not stating exactly what type of "special treatment" he is referring to.

A Chicago Tribune article published the day after the French test used a similar approach as the

New York Times article, in that it turned the focus away from the precarious nature of the atomic technology. In particular, the article noted that "authoritative sources in Britain said the French explosion was an undeniable achievement which will have important political implications" ("World Praise, Anger, Greet French Blast" 4). Although more direct, the Chicago Tribune article will have a similar persuasive effect on the reader, who is encouraged to note the "political implications" of a technology designed for war.

The examples of articles using such a propaganda tactic are numerous, and most can be found by studying articles printed the week of the French atomic bomb explosion. A New York Times printed the day after the explosion points to other diplomatic issues with the new French power: "Politically, the French are now entitled to a seat in the conference room [in Geneva]" (Rosenthal 2). The subtle point that was made was that the French are now involved with disarmament talks, something that completely shifts the focus away from aggressive acts as a result of having nuclear technology.

Indeed, there is more to the presentation of information than the facts one uses. The placement of the facts and the order can slowly mold the understanding of the reader. Through specific propaganda techniques reprogramming, authority, and commitment to consistency the author is able to take a potentially dangerous situation and make the reader feel completely comfortable with the various scenarios that may ensue.

## **How to Defend Against Propaganda**

As a result of our increasing sophistication and to build our civilization, we have created and environment so complex, so fast-paced, and information-laden, that we must increasingly deal with it in the fashion of the animals we long ago transcended. Thus, from the case studies on how the media uses propaganda, we can understand that the media does more than presentation facts and information. The media has the ability to exploit persuasive tactics to the specific definition of propaganda: the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person. Indeed, as we have shown, this does not have to be the "in your face," World War II propaganda. Instead, the presentation is subtle and unaware to the untrained eye, so that even slight difference in the presentation can help change contextual understanding.

We are not advocating that propaganda is wrong; we have tried to show, that overall it is usually helpful to respond to messages mindlessly, and that the truly only way to defend against it is to be more aware of the tactics being used.

Phil Zimbardo, an expert in mind control tactics, outlines in a paper twenty ways to resist unwanted social influence. We have listed three ways that are most relevant to defending against propaganda:

- 1. Be aware of the general perspective that others use to frame the problem or issue at hand, because accepting their frame on their terms gives them a powerful advantage. For example, the reader of newspaper articles on Pakistan's nuclear weapons must be aware that the author has inserted his understanding of situations that do not fall into the category of the article headline: whether this be in terms of Pakistan as a nation, Pakistan's military, or the Pakistani culture. In fact, it is usually through this framing of the situation that the author can persuade the reader to think of the issue in a different light.
- 2. Be sensitive to situational demands however trivial they may seem: group norms, group pressures, symbols of authority, slogans, and commitments. Don't believe in simple solutions

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to complex personal, social, and political problems. As with the media coverage of Pakistan and France, it is usually much easier for the reader to let an article tell him what to believe, instead of using the article as merely a suggestion of what may be believed. Especially as the tactics grow more and more refined, more and more subtle, and more and more persuasive, we find that the minute we stop observing with a critical eye, we have already been persuaded. It is so often that we find ourselves overwhelmed by work that needs to be done. It is so often that we do not have time to sort through the information presented to us so that we may derive our own solution. And sadly, it is so often that we let ourselves fall prey to propaganda for we have grown too weary to defend ourselves.

3. In the end, it must be remembered that it is not enough to dissent vocally -- one must be willing to disobey, to defy, to challenge, and to suffer any ensuing consequences of these actions (Zimbardo 47). The goal and proactive nature of this paper fall under this category. We hope that through our case studies of Pakistan and France, we were able to educate the reader in such a way that he becomes less susceptible to propaganda and realizes that it is all around, not just limited to a collection of World War II posters.

In a sense, the main theme of prevention is awareness; understand the situation and act accordingly. Only through this can one recognize persuasive tactics in propaganda and how they shape our beliefs.

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